

OLD IRANIAN LITERATURE

BY

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DEFINITION

§ 1. The term 'Iranian' derives from the Old Iranian ethnical adjective *Aryāna*, itself a derivative and synonym of *Arya*. In the first half of the first millenium B.C. many Indo European *Arya* tribes settled in the territory which as a result of their occupation came to be called Iran. With these Iranians the nomadic Sakas must be classed, although apart from sporadic incursions they remained outside the territory of Iran. Since *Aryāna* means 'Iranian', the modern term 'Indo-Aryan' has been coined to denote those *Arya* tribes who had penetrated to the Punjab, there to develop the literature of the Rig Veda. The close relationship between Iranians and Indo-Aryans is conveniently expressed by the statement that both groups together constitute the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European people. The present article is concerned with the literary activity, including oral 'literature', of the Medes, the Sakas, the ancient Persians, and the speakers of the Avestan language, as far as their literary output either survives, or is referred to in ancient sources. The Iranian affiliation of the peoples concerned results for the Medes from Herodotus' statement (vii 62) that they were once universally called 'Iranians' (*Ἀριοι*), for the Persians from Darius' reference to himself as 'an Iranian (*ariya*) of Iranian (*ariya*) lineage' (N a 14), for the speakers of Avestan from the ancient name of their country, *Aryana Vaējah* 'the expanse of the Iranians'. The Sakas, at least insofar as this name applies to the Scythians (cf. Herodotus vii 64), the Sarmatians (Sauro-matians), the Alans, and certain nomad groups in Central Asia, are thought to have been Iranian because (1) descendants of theirs in Central Asia (at Khotan and Tumšūq) and in the Caucasus (the Ossetes) spoke, respectively speak, Iranian languages, (2) some Scythian, and a large number of Sarmatian proper names are obviously Iranian, and (3) the name of the Alani, the immediate ancestors of the Ossetes, can be

confidently traced to the ethnicon *Aryāna*. It is, of course, likely that other Iranian peoples also cultivated forms of literature, at least oral. One may think e.g. of the Sogdians or the Parthians, both of whom displayed a lively literary activity in Middle Iranian times, or the Bactrians, or the speakers of the Iranian language, possibly Kambojan, to whom the recently discovered Aśoka inscription of Kandahar was addressed. No information, however, is available, that would permit the inclusion of these peoples in the present survey.

MEDIAN

§ 2. No records written in either Median or ancient Saka language are extant, and it is not known if either language was ever committed to writing. In Achaemenian times archives were kept not only at Persepolis, Susa, and Babylon, but also at Ecbatana, the capital of Media (cf. Ezra vi 2).; in all probability the Median government also maintained archives, but it does not follow that any documents therein preserved were written in Median language. Herodotus reports (i 100) that Deioces, whose long reign is variously dated across the turn of the 8th century, pronounced judgement on causes submitted to him in writing. This statement, however, need mean no more than that foreign scribes had been imported, who would read out to the king in Median, the briefs of plaintiff and defendant they had recorded in their own language (cf. § 5 on the Achaemenian practice). I.M. DIAKONOV's opinion that the Old Persian cuneiform script was used for inscriptional purposes already by the Medians, must be viewed against the current interpretation of Darius' words in Beh. § 70, according to which this king would have been the first to set up an inscription 'in Iranian (language)', cf. below, § 6. The existence of Median court poets (ὥδοι) in the first half of the 6th century is reported by Dinon. They drew their subject-matter from a traditional repertoire (εἰθισμένα). As samples of Median epic narrative may be regarded Ktesias' account of the events leading to the establishment of Median hegemony, and his version of the story of Parsondes the Persian: captured by the Babylonian Nanaros he becomes at the latter's court indistinguishable from a woman; liberated by his Median liege lord Artaeus he goes over to the Kadusioi, and leads them in a resounding defeat of the Medes. Naturally the story may also have belonged to the Persian epic (cf. § 15), just as the romance of Zariadres and Odatis, which Chares of Mytilene related as a Persian tale, presupposes in Mary BOYCE's opinion an identical Median legend connected with the cult of a god of love. A romantic tale which is found in several sources, but is

told with exceptional zest by Ktesias (*apud* Demetrius Phalereus, § 213), is that of the Mede Stryangaios, who fell in love with the Saka queen Zarinaia, failed in his suit, and took his life. The one extract Dinon quotes from what Angares, the most famous of the $\phi\delta\sigma\iota$, recited to Astyages, shows the poet boldly referring to the danger which threatened his royal patron from Cyrus. As lost products of Median religious poetry may be mentioned the $\theta\epsilon\sigma\gamma\omicron\nu\lambda\alpha\iota$ recited in Achaemenian times by the Magi (Herodotus, i 132), who were members of the Median clan or caste from which priests were recruited (cf. § 26). The composition of these hymns, which may have borne some resemblance to the Avestan Yašts, very likely goes back to the period of Median hegemony, or earlier.

SAKA

§ 3. To Cyaxares the Scythian language seemed sufficiently useful to be taught to Median boys (Herodotus, i 73). In it stories were told, taken over from the Issedones, of the one-eyed Arimaspi and of griffins guarding gold (*id.*, iv 27), as well as legends concerned with the origin of the Scyths in the hoary past (*id.*, iv 5-7). The Scythians themselves were credited by Herodotus with 'wisdom' (iv 46), and a taste for poetic imagery can be detected in their description of snow-flakes as 'feathers' (iv 7, 31). Some inference on the subjectmatter of Scytho-Sarmatian poems or narratives may be drawn from the remarkable literary patrimony of the Ossetes, which until the beginning of the last century was handed down orally through the ages. Certain customs which Herodotus describes as peculiar to the Scythians find their echo in the Ossetic Nart Saga, or in Ossetic folklore. Such are the practice of using towels and coats made of enemy scalps (iv 64); the mounting on pales of stuffed horses intended to accompany the dead king on his journey in the other world (iv 72); the bowl of wine of which only heroes may partake (iv 66). What for Herodotus was a matter of custom appears in the Nart Saga as mythological reminiscence, sometimes with magical or religious connotations. Thus the Saga tells of a furcoat made of human scalps and beards which the Nart Soslan had assiduously assembled; to fondness for scalping also belongs the notion that in the days when it was not safe to entrust one's head to anybody for shaving, the Nart had detachable brain-pans, which their owners could remove, shave, and replace. Again, Soslan's horse, after being killed on his return journey from the underworld, continues to serve him once its hide has been stuffed with straw. On the other hand, the bowl of wine which in Herodotus' description is the reward of the brave, withheld from the cowards, becomes

in the Nart Saga a magical means of testing the truthfulness of the account which each Nart gives of his exploits. Such steps from the Herodotean realities of Scythian society to their mythological interpretation in Ossetic folklore, are sufficiently short to have conceivably been taken already in Old Iranian times. Possible confirmation of such early dating of the Nart Saga may be sought in the archaic connotation which H.W. BAILEY attributes to the name *Nart*, and in the reference to the Bosporan kingdom which V.I. ABAYEV has traced in the Saga. It goes without saying that not all episodes told by Ossetic story-tellers should be attributed to ancient Saka inventiveness. Thus the story of Polyphemus, which is incorporated in the Nart cycle, also belongs to the folklore of many other peoples. The cycle evidently at various times absorbed episodes from various sources. But the originality of the main motifs of the cycle, combined with the straight line which linguistically connects the present-day Ossetes with Sarmato-Alanic tribes of the beginning of our era, encourages the view that we are basically dealing with ancient Saka 'oral-literary' material.

§ 4. We may then sketch with some confidence the outlines of a Saka epic cycle centred around a predatory tribe called the Nart (sing. and plur.). Its members have a meeting place, the *nixās*, where the heroes lounge about, relate past adventures, and plan new ones; the main attraction of the *nixās* is a stone slab, by lying on which all sorrows are forgotten. *Æxsærtæg*, the ancestor of the chief Nart clan bears a name which is derived from the pan-Iranian word for kingship, *xšaθra-*. His wife belongs to the water spirits. She gives birth, after *Æxsærtæg* and his brother have killed each other, to the twins *Uruz-mæg* and *Xæmic*; when she is dead a spirit begets from her the twins' half-sister *Satana*. *Xæmic* becomes the father of the juvenile hero *Batradz*. From *Satana* and a water-spirit the villain *Sirdon* is born, just in time to become the cause of the 'Achilles heel' (in the present case 'knee') of *Soslan*, in whose birth from a stone *Satana* is instrumental. *Soslan*, a most enterprising hero, ultimately perishes through the action of a wheel which rolls about of its own volition. From the marriage of *Uruz-mæg* and *Satana* a nameless boy is born, who is inadvertently killed by his father, but is extremely active during a period of leave from the world of the dead. Within such a framework, and around such characters, a wealth of episodes is spun in the Ossetic epic, many of which will have been added to an initial Saka nucleus in the long course of some twenty-five centuries. It may be noted that the close interaction of the living and the dead in the Nart world, has led R. BLEICHSTEINER to regard as

religious background of this cycle a Saka cult of the dead. No trace of the Nart Saga has been noticed in the Middle Iranian literature of the Khotanese, who were descendants of eastern Sakas. On the other hand, the Sakastānian hero Rustam, although only known from Persian and Sogdian sources, may have originally belonged to a Saka epic, different from the Nart Saga.

PERSIAN

§ 5. Herodotus more than once refers to Persian authorities as a source of historical information (i 1^{bis}, 4, 95). But it need not be supposed that anything like the connected account which he gives in i 95-130 of the early history of Cyrus (as one of four variants) had been committed to writing by any Persian author. Herodotus very likely collected his information from the mouths of individuals who apart from relying on hearsay, personal recollections, and acquaintance with the Persian epic (cf. § 15), had access to the royal correspondence and decrees preserved in archives (cf. Ezra, vi 1 sq.), which they interpreted each according to his political bias or allegiance. As an example of such written sources may serve the correspondence quoted in Ezra v⁶ — vi¹² between Tatnai and Darius, which embodies a decree by Cyrus. The correspondence was conducted in Aramaic language through the employment of scribes (presumably mostly Aramaeans) who wrote down in Aramaic whatever their employer dictated in Old Persian, and read out to him in Persian whatever communication, written in Aramaic, had been received. For the Aramaic language and script (which was especially suitable for writing on parchment and papyrus) became under Darius, and thereafter remained, the official medium of written communication throughout the empire, irrespective of the languages in which messages were dictated. From the end of the fifth century we have thirteen letters written in Aramaic on leather, which belong to the correspondence of the Persian satrap of Egypt, Aršāma. Not surprisingly these, and other fifth century Aramaic documents found in Egypt, contain a large number of Persian loanwords, and some loan-translations.

§ 6. Beside leather and papyrus, on which the Aramaic text was written in ink, clay tablets inscribed in cuneiform script and often protected by clay envelopes on which the text was duplicated, continued to be used for correspondence among Persians. Messages of this type, compiled in unspecified language, were taken by Bagaios to Oroites, according to BENVENISTE's convincing interpretation of Herodotus iii 128. The records of the treasury of the royal household at Persepolis, which as far as

preserved are dated from 492 until 459, are written on such tablets in Elamite language, most likely because the treasury scribes were Elamites. Darius himself states that the text of the Behistun inscription (about 519 B.C.) had been reproduced 'on (clay-)envelopes and on leather' (B iv 89 sq.). This probably means that translations of the basic text, which according to the Elamite version of § 70 of the inscription had not previously been recorded in 'Iranian (*ariya*)' language, were circulated in Akkadian and Elamite on clay tablets (conceivably also the Old Persian text was thus duplicated, cf. H. H. SCHAEDEER, *SPAW*, 1931, 644), and in Aramaic on parchment; fragments of the latter are in fact preserved. In addition, Akkadian and Elamite versions are inscribed beside the Old Persian text at Behistun, and normally wherever Achaemenian inscriptions are found. Of some inscriptions also Egyptian versions were made.

§ 7. Thus we have no evidence that in the Achaemenian period Old Persian was ever used in written form except in the cuneiform inscriptions dictated by, or on behalf of, Darius, Xerxes, and the three Artaxerxes. The few Old Persian inscriptions which purport to have been worded by predecessors of Darius, including the brief ones of Cyrus, are scarcely earlier, in some cases clearly considerably later, than the period of Darius. As to the post-Achaemenian period, the only record that is perhaps written in Old Persian language is the inscription in Aramaic writing at Naqš-i Rostam, of which so far only a few words have been deciphered. While the Old Persian cuneiform inscriptions are of great historical and linguistic importance, their literary value cannot be rated very highly. The promise contained in Darius' spirited and well-conceived attempt to turn Old Persian into a literary language, was never fulfilled: the inscriptions of his successors are, with the exception of Xerxes' 'Daiva' tablet (XP *h*), nothing but a rehash of phrases coined by Darius, in which sporadically additional words, such as *ustašanā*- 'staircase', or *paraday(a)dā*- 'παράδεισος' (cf. BENVENISTE, *JAs.*, 1958, 58), make their appearance, with Artaxerxes II also the names of Miθra and Anāhitā as divinities to be worshipped beside Ahura Mazdāh. In the 'Daiva' tablet the author has something of considerable interest to say, for which he found no ready pattern in the phraseology of the Darius inscriptions: he says it in sufficiently clumsy a fashion to enable us to see that no great stylist was lost in him.

§ 8. We are thus left with Darius (ruled 521-486) as being to our knowledge the first Persian to have his words recorded in Persian language, and the only ancient Persian to do so both extensively and in a personal

style, the part gifted courtiers may have played in the composition of the Darius inscriptions being here necessarily disregarded. Darius' literary achievement, within the limits of what one may expect to find in state inscriptions, is praiseworthy. The monotony which the simplicity of his language at times induces is compensated by neatness of expression and absence of bombast. The author proceeds in a matter-of-fact tone, which occasionally acquires warmth under the impact of his ethical convictions. The care with which he weighs his words can be gathered from his remark that a *complete* account of his enterprises would have been received with scepticism (B iv 46 sqq.). Apart from very brief inscriptions which serve as authorship marks on parts of buildings, etc., each text dictated by Darius is well planned as consisting of a main part preceded by an introduction and followed by a peroration.

§ 9. In the earliest, the B(ehistun) inscription, the INTRODUCTION consists of a self-presentation with genealogy ('I am Darius the great king . . . , son of . . .') and legitimization, followed by the acknowledgement that Darius owes his power to Ahura Mazdāh. This pattern, without the legitimization, is found in many later inscriptions. On the other hand, in the two inscriptions on Darius' tomb at N(aqš-i Rostam), which presumably were among his last, the author's first words are a tribute to Ahura Mazdāh. This is also the case in P(ersepolis) *d*, Suez *c*, and several inscriptions at S(usa), all of which may therefore have been set up at a later date than those which follow the B pattern. The initial tribute to the god is followed in S *e*, *f*, and Suez *c*, by the self-presentation, as second part of the introduction. The Elvend inscription consists of the introduction only, which makes it likely that SCHAEDEER was right in attributing it to the time of Xerxes (SPAW, 1931, 644), when the feeling which Darius had for composition had been lost.

§ 10. The most common form of PERORATION (P *d*, *e*, *h*; S *e*, *f*, *j*, *n*, *s*, *t*) is a prayer to Ahura Mazdāh to protect Darius and his house (in S *f*, *j*, also his country, viz. Persis, cf. P *d*, below, § 12), or what had been built by him. In N *a* this is followed by an exhortation not to eschew Ahura Mazdāh's path. Suez *c* has no peroration. B has one epilogue at the end of the fourth column, which originally concluded the inscription; it refers to the recording of the text, cf. above, § 6. A second epilogue is found twice in the fifth column, where the accounts of two expeditions, for the sake of reporting which the column was added at a later stage, each end with the following peroration: 'whoso will worship Ahura Mazdāh, Truth shall forever be his, (both while he is) alive and (after he is) dead' (lines 19 and 35: replace previous readings by *yā[vaišaiy arta]m*).

§ 11. The MAIN TEXT starts off in four inscriptions (B, P *e*, S *e*, N *a*) with lists of the countries under Darius' sway. There follow in P *e* an injunction to protect the Persian people and not submit to foreign rulers, in N *a* the statement that Darius restored order in a world beset by unrest (cf. also S *e* 31 sqq.). In B, after stressing the initial subservience of the countries listed, Darius sets forth at great length (i 27 — iv 32 = 291 lines) the main events of his career: the wresting of the kingship from the false Smerdis, and the suppression of the rebellions which broke out in several countries after his accession. The historical narrative is followed by consideration of the cause which moved these countries to rebel: not inborn wickedness, but Falsehood, since the countries were deceived by ringleaders (iv 34). Hence future kings must guard against Falsehood. Darius swears by his faith in Ahura Mazdāh that his words are true (iv 44 read *auramazdāhaⁿdugam vratiyaiy* 'I pledge the fact of (my) being a follower of Ahura Mazdāh's ordinances', see JAOS, 1959, 198). The reader is accordingly urged to reveal them 'to the people' and protect the inscription. Finally Darius' six partners in the plot against the false Smerdis are named, and the care of their families enjoined on future kings.

§ 12. In P *d* only one country is mentioned, Persis ('beautiful, rearing good horses and good men', cf. S *f* 11 sq., Suez *c* 4), which Darius asks Ahura Mazdāh to protect from hostile armies, famine, and Falsehood. N *a* 38-47 refers to the adjacent sculptures of the thronebearers as reflecting the distance from Persis 'which the spear of the Persian man has reached'. Elsewhere the extent of the empire ('the whole earth' S *b*, *f* 18) is indicated by its frontier provinces: from the Trans-Sogdian Sakas to Ethiopia, from India to Lydia (P *h*). In Suez *c* only the conquest of Egypt is mentioned, followed by a brief account of the digging of the canal which connected the Nile with the Red Sea. Chief among the building inscriptions is S *f*, which lists in detail the materials employed in the erection of Darius' palace at Susa, mentioning the countries from which they were brought, and the nationalities of the men who brought or wrought them. What Darius had built is called 'excellent' (S *f* 56) or 'seeming excellent' (S *a*, *j*); 'excellent', too, is the visible whole which Ahura Mazdāh has created (N *b* 2).

§ 13. The most personal inscription, unfortunately also the most difficult, is N *b*, of which Strabo, xv 3⁸, quoted an extract from Onesikritos. Here Darius reveals his attitude towards his fellow-men, and describes his mental and physical accomplishments. In B iv 65 he had proclaimed himself 'neither disloyal nor false', an oppressor of 'neither poor nor rich'. In N *b* this is amplified: 'I am a friend of justice, I am not a friend of

injustice. It is not my pleasure that the poor shall suffer injustice on account of the rich, or that the rich shall suffer injustice on account of the poor'. Men are punished or rewarded by Darius as they deserve (thus also B i 21 sq.). The king's apparent disregard of informers is noteworthy: 'What a man says about another man I do not believe; so long as the (latter) man [probably with special reference to vassal-kings] obeys the ordinances of good laws (*radan-*, cf. BARTHOLOMAE's *razan-*) in (respect of) what he does, or if he brings in (*scil.* tribute, taxes; cf. the tribute-bearers by the staircase of the Appadan of Persepolis) according to his power, I am content, very pleased, well satisfied', lines 21-27 (thus to be translated). Darius considered himself no mean sportsman: a good fighter on foot and horseback, skilled with his hands and feet, a good archer and spear-thrower.

§ 14. The inscriptions of Darius reveal a strong personality imbued with unshakeable self-confidence, which is backed by the conviction that all his actions are willed by Ahura Mazdāh, and therefore bound to succeed. The author's profound religious feeling saves him from arrogance; his is the success, but the merit is Ahura Mazdāh's. The interplay of king and god is summed up in the remarkable sentence 'Ahura Mazdāh is mine, I am Ahura Mazdāh's' (S k). The influence Zoroaster's doctrine may have had on Darius has been hotly debated. The mere worship of Ahura Mazdāh ('others gods' are only summarily acknowledged, apparently for political reasons), does not in itself suffice to prove that Darius was a Zoroastrian. It may simply mean what MEILLET, partly relying on somewhat uncertain Assyrian evidence, was prepared to assume, namely that the worship of Ahura Mazdāh was common to all Iranians even before Zoroaster's time. It is, however, possible that not the acquaintance with Ahura Mazdāh, but the god's exclusive position in Darius' religion, the intimate and spiritual relation between the god and the man, the influence attributed to Falsehood, ultimately derive from the prophet's teachings. The medium may have been Darius' father Vištāspa, for whom filial consideration is shown in S f 12 sq., 57sq. Vištāspa was in Aryana Vaejah, the homeland of Zoroastrianism (cf. § 16), at least once, when he accompanied Cyrus in his fatal campaign against the Massagetae (Herodotus i 209). From there he may have brought home and imparted to young Darius the notions in which, as they appear in the latter's inscriptions, we seem to recognize the spirit of the Gāthās. Darius would not be concerned so much with Zoroaster, the individual responsible for consolidating the worship of Ahura Mazdāh in Aryana Vaejah, as with what he understood to be the Aryana Vaeja-

hian view of 'the god of the Iranians', as Ahura Mazdāh is called in the Elamite version of B, col. iii 77. Anything emanating from Aryana Vaējah, the region of Iran where Iranians first established a political and cultural centre, would be bound to impress the youth whose ambition it was to impose Iranian values on the world.

§ 15. Before leaving the Old Persian literature, its epic must briefly be mentioned. From STRABO we learn (xv 3¹⁸) that teachers of Persian boys were in the habit of blending useful instruction with the recitation of myths, whose subject-matter was 'the deeds of gods and great men'. To CHRISTENSEN is due the attractive suggestion that the βασιλικαὶ διφθέραι from which *Ktesias* is reported to have drawn his material, were not official records of the Achaemenian administration, but a royal epic, the Greek description being the rendering of an Old Persian title that anticipated the Modern Persian *Šāh Nāma*. Traces of this epic have been plausibly elicited by CHRISTENSEN from Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*. Among episodes which Greek writers may have quoted from the Persian epic are the Herodotean legend of Zopyrus' self-defacing ruse, and *Ktesias* version of the history of Cyrus and Cambyses. The story of Zariadres and Odatis used to be interpreted as a Persian adaptation of a Kayanian legend which had reached Western Iran in the wake of Zoroastrianism; it is, however, more likely, that the story reproduces an earlier Median tale (cf. § 2).

AVESTAN

§ 16. The conviction that the country of the speakers of the Avestan language was Chorasmia has been steadily growing since 1901, when Marquart first voiced it. It rests on the two highly probable assumptions that when Avestan writers mention the country Aryana Vaējah they mean their own country, and that Aryana Vaējah is at least partly identical with the region they call X^vāirizəm (accusative) = Chorasmia. The boundaries of Aryana Vaējah are not stated in the Avesta, but the few data supplied by Herodotus and Hekataios on pre-Achaemenian Chorasmia indicate, as HENNING has made likely, that this Eastern Iranian state included the provinces of Marv and Herat. Aryana Vaējah was ruled in the seventh and sixth centuries by a dynasty called Kavi, which originated from Sīstān. The last Kavi mentioned in the Avesta is Vištāspa (not to be confused with the homonymous father of Darius), whom Zaratuštra converted to his religious views. Under Vištāspa, or immediately after him, the Chorasmian kingdom surrendered to Cyrus (559-529). Zaratuštra's dates can be calculated on the basis of the

Sasanian Zoroastrian tradition as being either 630-553, or 628-551, or 618-541. Beyond this the only authoritative data on Zoroāstra's life are those which can be gleaned from the Gāthās (cf. Y 29, 44, 46, 51, 53, below, § 22), of which he must be the author because in six Gathic poems he is named in the first person (Y 33. 13-14; 43.8; 46.19; 19.42; 50.6-11; 51.10-11, 15).

§ 17. The extant Avesta, in which the Gāthās are embedded, is all that remains of a collection of religious texts in Avestan language, which was made in Sasanian times (226-642 A.D.) for the purpose of providing the officially revived Zoroastrian Church with an authoritative canon. To this day the Avesta (the name is a Middle Persian word which probably means 'Injunction') has remained the scripture of the Zoroastrians. By the third century A.D. the ancient language of Aryana Vaējah had long ceased to be used except by Zoroastrian priests, to whom it was the holy language of revelation. In it they recited prayers, hymns, liturgies, and whole catechetical chapters, which they had received through a long, mainly oral tradition. According to the 9th century Pahlavi *Dēnkart* (Acts of the Religion) the texts of the scripture had been written down in Achaemenian times, but Alexander had burnt them; one of the Vologeses of the Arsacid dynasty (c. 250 B. C.-226 A.D.) rescued them from oblivion, and under Ardašīr a selective canon was established. However, the recording of the text in a special Avestic alphabet invented for this purpose, probably took place only in the sixth century. During the Arab invasion parts of the canon seem to have been lost, but even so the author of the *Dēnkart* had before him about three times more Avestan material than what has come down to us in manuscripts datable from 1278 onwards.

§ 18. The probability that before being recorded in the Avestic alphabet with its 49 letters (including 14 for vowels), the scripture had been committed to writing in one of the consonantal writing systems of Iran, induced F. C. Andreas to advance the theory that the Vulgate was the result of a mechanical transliteration of an unvocalized text into the newly devised alphabet. By this theory an Urtext could be reconstructed in which, say, the Vulgate forms *aēm*, *tūm*, *gaoyaoitīm* (which in a consonantal writing system would be spelled **ʾ-y-m*, **t-w-m*, **g-w-y-w-t-y-m*) could be re-vocalized as **ayam*, **tuwam*, **gawwyutim*, in accordance with the corresponding Vedic forms. The merit, as well as the proof, of the theory seemed to Andreas's supporters to lie in the possibility it offered to restore missing syllables, or eliminate redundant ones, in many Avestan verse-lines which, on the assumption that the original

number of syllables per line was constant, would have been irregular in the Vulgate. The arguments against the theory, or at least against its usefulness, are worth stating. (1) Too many Vulgate spellings agree with the corresponding Vedic or Old Persian forms to leave any doubt that, even if a transliteration did take place, the transliterators were at least partly guided by a reliable oral tradition. (2) It is therefore methodically inadvisable to assume that this tradition had let them down where forms like *aēm*, etc., are concerned. (3) It has been shown that most of the regularly "incorrect" forms of the Vulgate fall into a coherent system that stands a good chance of reflecting a linguistic reality, and some correspond to phonetic developments which are attested in other Iranian languages. (4) To opine that, say, *gaoyaoitīm* represents a wrong vocalization of **g-w-y-w-t-y-m*, means to transfer one's reliance from a well-attested manuscript tradition to an unknown text, the shape of the letters and orthographic habits of which are anybody's guess. In a Book-Pahlavi text without diacritics, for instance, *g-w-y-w-t-y-m* would be indistinguishable from *d-n-g-w-t-y-m* or *y-w-d-n-t-y-m*; therefore the mere fact that the spelling *gaoyaoitīm* reflects a correct identification of the consonants, would suffice to prove that also in this case the transliteration, if that is what took place, was backed by an authoritative oral tradition. (5) While the verse-lines of the Vulgate that conform to the isosyllabic principle are in no need of the theory, those which do not conform cannot prove it, because apart from textual corruptions, nothing but the acceptance of the theory would warrant the assumption that they originally did conform. (6) Where the syllable-count is uneven, it can be satisfactorily explained without reference to the theory (see § 30).

§ 19. For the manuscript tradition of the extant Avesta, and the relation of its subdivisions to those of the Sasanian canon, the reader is referred to GELDNER's detailed discussion. Here only form, contents, and relative chronology of the main surviving Avestan texts can be indicated. These easily fall into two groups: those belonging to the so-called Younger Avesta, and those which are written in a more conservative form of Avestan speech, the Gāthic dialect. The religious attitude displayed in the texts fairly corresponds to the linguistic distinction. Gāthic texts on the whole represent what has been called 'Zarathuštrianism', the pure doctrine of the founder, whereas the Younger Avesta is the scripture of a mixed religion, for which we may reserve the term 'Zoroastrianism'. The former is briefly defined as an ethical dualism tempered by a monotheism which is centred in Ahura Mazdāh and his Aspects. In Zoroastrianism other divinities are worshipped beside Ahura Mazdāh, sometimes

even regarded as superior to him. The Gāthic texts, which in bulk only amount to about one sixth of the extant Avesta, are the following: (a) the Gāthās, (b) the *Yasna Haptan̄hāiti* ('Worship in seven chapters'), (c) the four oldest prayers, (d) an invocation of Sraoša ('Discipline'), (e) a praise of prayer, (f) the Zoroastrian creed, (g) its appendix, and (h) a brief litany. Within the Younger Avesta three main groups can be ranged chronologically: the oldest consists of a number of hymns (Yāsts) each dedicated to one or more divinities (i); next come the Zoroastrian litanies (k); and finally, ancient enough in contents, but composed in post-Achaemenian times, ritual prescriptions, purification rules, and instruction on various religious matters (l). The surviving Avestan texts are divided into sections, generally in accordance with the order or purpose assigned to them in the religious service of the Zoroastrians. The names of the main sections are *Y(asna)*, *V(isp)r(at)*, *Ny(āyišn)*, *G(āh)*, *Y(aš)t*, *S(ih rōčak)*, *Ā(frīnakān)*, *V(endidad)*, *N(irangistān)*, *H(aδōxt Nask)*, and *Aog(əmadaēčā)*. The last two names refer to texts which are preserved only in fragments. Among these sections the categories listed above are distributed as follows: (a) = Y 28-34, 43-51, 53; (b) = Y 35-41; (c) = Y 4,²⁶ 27¹³⁻¹⁴, 54¹; (d) = Y 56; (e) = Y 58; (f) = Y 11¹⁷ — 12; (g) = Y 13, 1-6 + beginning of 7, Y 14¹⁻²; (h) = Y 42; (i) = Yt, Y 9-11¹⁰, 57; (k) = Vr, Ny, G, S, Ā, and the remainder of Y; (l) = V, N, H, Aog.

§ 20. The GĀTHĀS are the oldest surviving product of Iranian literature, and easily its most important contribution to world-thought. Unfortunately the Gāthic poems are among the most difficult ever written. What escapes us is not only the meaning of numerous words, but also in countless instances the correct identification of inflectional endings, without which no sentence can be unequivocally construed. The treatment of the subject-matter, man's relation to God, his unavoidable choice between Good and Evil, his ultimate fate, is regularly punctuated with references to God's Aspects or Shapes (Yt 13⁸¹), the 'Entities' Good Mind, Truth, Power, Devotion, Health, and Life. When action through Entities, interaction of Entities, or tendency towards Entities intervene in the narrative, the logical sequence of a poem often becomes inextricable. The result is that scholars are agreed on the meaning of only a few Gāthic stanzas, and two experts independently analysing a whole Gāthic poem could only by a freak of accident give closely resembling accounts of it.

§ 21. Three approaches to Gāthic interpretation deserve mention. The first, and usual, implies that there is a logical development running

through each poem, which though often seemingly irretrievable, is worth pursuing by trial and error. The second, which is due to MEILLET, dispenses with the necessity of finding a logical connection where there seems to be none, on the assumption that single stanzas, or groups of stanzas, were originally linked by prose passages which have been lost. The third method, applied by LENTZ to Y 28 and 47, is more complicated. It consists in establishing the main motif of a given poem by means of a frequency test, and adding to it the ever-present motifs of 'human sphere' and 'divine sphere'. Each motif is then subdivided, and the poem parcelled out in the categories thus established. The result is that instead of a 'linear' development, LENTZ finds a dispersal of strands of thought, which defies comprehension unless the poem is presented synoptically. The underlying method of composition LENTZ considers to be specifically Iranian, and comparable to the dropping and resumption of thoughts in a letter written under emotional stress. However, such inordinate procedure is at variance with Zaratustra's clear and forceful 'linear' exposition in such Gāthic passages as we happen to understand, and LENTZ's elaborate synoptic view of Y 47 seems to overtax a poem which lends itself to a straight-forward 'linear' interpretation (cf. § 22). We should probably do well to uphold the first approach, bearing in mind that Zaratustra often abruptly turns to address God, and probably speaks to God in a large number of the stanzas we do not understand. In talking to the Omniscient the poet may often have forgone the precaution of stating transitional thoughts. To recapture these is the fascinating, but not very rewarding task which faces the interpreter of the Gāthās. The best chance of progress, however slow, lies in renewed efforts to test the correctness of the Pahlavi translation of unknown Gāthic words by means of the vastly increased Iranian vocabulary which has become available in the last few decades. By this method, to quote two examples, HENNING has been able to establish the meaning of the Gāthic words *grēhma(h)*- and *paθman*-. The mere etymological interpretation of Gāthic problem-words carries much less conviction, and explanations that are based on what may, or may not be Vedic parallels, are necessarily uncertain. Nevertheless these methods, combined with a close scrutiny of internal Gāthic evidence, can still give rise to stimulating interpretations, such as some of those proposed by H. HUMBACH and P. THIEME, or W.P. SCHMID's suggestion that the Gāthic cow, like her Rigvedic counterpart, sometimes represents the notion of poetry.

§ 22. Subject to the uncertainties mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the salient points of each Gāthic poem can be presented as follows. Y 28

(11 stanzas). A prayer on behalf of Z. and his patrons, that prayer may meet with divine assistance, and recognition with revelation. In each stanza the argument is skilfully woven around the names of Mazdāh, Truth, and Good Thought. Y 29 (11 sts). The cow has been placed under the protection of Z., a weak man with no power to enforce justice. She will thereby remain exposed to oppression, until through the prophet's teaching safe dwelling and peace prevail on earth. The poem takes the form of a dialogue between the Soul of the cow, the Fashioner of the cow, the Entities represented by Truth, and Ahura Mazdāh. Y 30 (11 sts). Sets forth the essence of Z.'s dualism: each man must choose between good and evil, as did the two Spirits in the beginning. Choice even faced the gods: the daēvas have acquired the reputation of evil gods as a result of making the wrong choice. Y 31 (22 sts). To help men to make the right choice Z. announces Ahura Mazdāh's rewards: bliss for the owner of Truth, miserable existence for him who owns Falsehood. Both the knowing and the ignorant talk to persuade: one should listen to the former, but fight the latter. Y 32 (16 sts). The instances of Yima and the heretic teacher, as well as the denigrator of the cow and sun, illustrate the dangers which beset the owner of Truth. Wealth (*grōhma(h)*-, cf. § 21), and blood sacrifice offered to activate the Haoma plant, precipitate the cleavage between the 'House of Evil Thought' (Hell) and the 'House of Good Thought' (Paradise). Y 33 (14 sts). The Judge requites in kind the respective owners of Truth, Falsehood, and a combination of both. To please Mazdāh evil should be done to the owner of Falsehood, good to the Truth-owning man. Z. strives to enlist Sraoša ('Discipline') and practice cattle-breeding, in consultation with the Lord to whom he offers his life in sacrifice. Y 34 (15 sts). May your fire, O Mazdāh, be pleasant to your supporters, painful to your enemies. For we come to you having parted company with the latter. Z. demands of God a sign, and ultimately the 'rehabilitation' of the existence. Y 43 (16 sts). By spreading the Lord's message Z. will have to suffer among men. For he is bidden to teach Truth without the assistance of Sraoša ('Discipline'), who at the final retribution will make Truth self-evident through the awards he distributes. Y 44 (20 sts containing as many questions asked of Mazdāh on worship, cosmology, ethics, and eschatology). Is not the Truth-owning man a 'healer of the existence' while Mazdāh is both the father of Truth and the promoter of cosmic order, the creator of light and darkness, and of the cow? Does not the reward of the clear-sighted consist in the individual religious belief (*daēnā*-) he purifies for himself? Which of the two parties will win? If Z. should not get his salary — ten mares with a stallion and

one camel —, is there no punishment for the withholder of wages from him who has earned them? And what of the priests of evil religion, who torture the cow? **Y 45** (11 sts) enjoins listening to Z.'s words, and outlines the programme of his sermons. **Y 46** (19 sts containing autobiographical allusions, initial failure and subsequent success being telescoped). Distrusted by his people and rulers Z. considers emigrating. He is powerless and poor. But the Lord with His fire and thought protects him. Z. was the first to teach that (or how) Ahura Mazdāh is to be worshipped as the most powerful Lord. Ahura Mazdāh will give 'life' to the men who satisfy Z.: Kavi Vištāspa, his minister Jāmāspa, and the latter's brother Frašaoštra. **Y 47** (6 sts, in each of which the logical thread of the poem makes, as it were, a loop to involve the Incremental Spirit, S(penta) M(ai-nyu)). May the Lord through SM grant man Health and Life (1), man cultivating (in return) the very good thing(s) (that come) of SM (2), (namely) the cow [= poetry, v. § 21] and correct thinking, which SM has fashioned in consultation with Good Mind (3). From SM the owner of Falsehood turns away (4); yet he, too, partakes of the good things which through SM the Lord assigns to the Truth-owning man (5). (Eventually, however,) the Lord will bring about through SM the separation of owners of Falsehood from Truth-owning men. (Knowledge of) this separation will induce many to make the right choice (6). **Y 48** (12 sts). The poet contrasts man's behaviour on earth with his final destiny. Each man will be held responsible for the shape he gives to his thinking. Good, not bad rulers should rule, cattle be fattened, Wrath warded off. May the intoxicating drink used by the Mumbler-priests be branded. May there be pastures and good dwelling, security from the owners of Falsehood, recognition of Good Thought which will prompt the Saviours to fulfil Mazdāh's decree. **Y 49** (12 sts). Z. renounces all dealings with the owners of Falsehood who by increasing Wrath cultivate the daēvas. In after-life they will eat 'bad food'. But for the brothers Frašaoštra and Jāmāspa blissful union with Truth is in store. **Y 50** (11 sts). Z. yokes his hymns like steeds, adoring God with outstretched hands. He prays on behalf of the clear-sighted, pledging himself to praise Mazdāh to his utmost. **Y 51** (22 sts). Mazdāh's red fire and molten metal will harm the owner of Falsehood, benefit the Truth-owning man. Any ill-wisher of Z.'s is an evil son of Falsehood. Such was the one who in the fulness (*pereti-*, line 12a) of winter refused to shelter Z. when his steeds were shivering with cold. His soul shall tremble at the Činvat bridge. But for his patrons Vištāspa, Frašaoštra, and Jāmāspa, Z. solicits God's favours. **Y 53** (9 sts) differs from the other Gāthās in that Truth and Power are each

named only once, Good Thought thrice, the other Entities not at all. Z.'s daughter Pouručistā appears in obscure circumstances, apparently giving advice to brides. Usually thought to be P.'s wedding hymn, this poem is suspected by NYBERG to refer to Z. as having died.

§ 23. The almost proverbial difficulty of the Gāthās has not been conducive to agreed aesthetic evaluation. Opinions range from DUCHESNE-GUILLEMIN's 'une véhémence tournée vers l'action et la recherche, une masse serrée de questions, d'obsécrations, de commandements, d'avertissements, de prières' (*Zoroastre*, 174), to GELDNER's 'erschöpfen sich in ewiger Wiederholung der gleichen Gedanken' (*Die Avesta-Literatur*, 232). One view discussed by HENNING, *Zoroaster*, 8, would even reduce the poems, in his words, to 'crazy mutterings shouted by a senseless man in a hemp-induced stupor'. Without going to extremes it can scarcely be wrong to say that the Gāthās convey lofty ideas in noble verse, and even through the lexical and syntactic haze which bedims them, a sense of deep sincerity, anxious inquiry for truth, and missionary urge. Whatever one may think of the numerous obscure verses, no sooner is the haze momentarily lifted than one meets with clear vision and clear presentation, such as might be expected from the author of a religious system in which clear thinking is valued more than anything else. Within the limited range of ancient Indo-Iranian poetry we know, the originality of the Gāthic kind of religious lyric is obvious. All the more noteworthy is the adherence to conventional Indo-Iranian, and even Indo-European poetic technique. As Gāthic manifestations of it have been recognized (a) the rhetorical parenthesis (e.g. 'this I ask you—tell me truly, O Ahura—who . . .?'), (b) the sequence *announcement of message—request of attention—message*, and (c) the metrics. The last closely correspond to Vedic practice: verses have a constant number of syllables, stanzas of verses. Occasional irregularities in the length of lines, excluding those where the spelling disguises the correct number of morae, may indicate the beginning of a process which reached completion in Younger Avestan times (cf. § 30), viz. the replacement by stress metre of the isosyllabic metrics of the Vedas. Five strophic patterns occur: (1) 3 lines, each of 7 + 9 syllables; (2) 5 lines of 4 + 7; (3) 4 of 4 + 7; (4) 3 of 7 + 7; (5) 2 of 7 + 5, followed by 2 of 7 + 7 + 5. In conclusion one is tempted to argue that Zoroāstra, who invented a new kind of religious lyric to express by means of age-old conventional versification a revolution in thought which to this day stands out as a landmark in the history of religion, may in fairness be called not only a great prophet, but also a poet of uncommon power.

§ 24. The remainder of Gāthic literature (cf. § 19) consists preponderantly of prose texts which were recited by members of the early Zoroāštrian community. One of the **c** prayers (Y 4²⁶) is explicitly attributed to Zoroāštra in Y 21¹, and the absence of Z.'s name and of quotations from the Gāthās in **b**, leaves open the possibility that at least some of its chapters (perhaps Y 35, 36, 40, 41) were community prayers which Z. himself had composed (note the apparent lapse into the 1st person sing. in Y 40¹, 41⁵). Other parts of **b**, however, show the beginning of a tendency which becomes pronounced in **g** and **h**, to turn water, the Fravašis, the Soul of the cow, etc., into objects of worship. This tendency, which is not yet apparent in **f**, is a prelude to the change of mentality which made possible the switch-over to a motley pantheon in the Younger Avesta, to which we now proceed.

§ 25. To discuss in compendious form the YOUNGER AVESTA, which constitutes about five sixths of the scripture, is an even less thankful task than to describe the Gāthic parts. These at least are few, have a common, datable origin, and move within a restricted sphere of thought. In the Younger Avesta, though the language difficulties are less formidable, the range of problems is much wider, and tends to differ with each of the numerous texts under consideration. 'Zoroastrianism' opened the gates to a flood of heterogeneous religious, mythical, ritual, and other elements, which partly occur, ill-defined, only in the Avesta, partly have to be compared with often unreliable parallels in the Vedas, partly depend for elucidation on whatever can be made of the much later Pahlavi commentaries, or generally of Middle and New Iranian developments. The questions of sources, absolute and relative chronology, interdependence, authorship, contents, and form, can properly be considered only in respect of each individual text, and they remain to a large extent unsolved. In such circumstances the following discussion, though representing what we think can fairly be maintained in general terms, is necessarily somewhat sweeping, and subject to modification in detail.

§ 26. As the essential has to be picked out, it is mainly the structure of this complex scripture which will here occupy us. No understanding of it is possible, unless the historical and religious background against which the Younger Avesta can or must be viewed, has first been defined. 'Zoroastrianism' is not a syncretistic religion in the technical sense of the word, but a juxtaposition of various Iranian religions which includes, and thereby utterly contradicts, 'Zoroāštrianism'. From the appearance of Miθra and Anāhitā beside Ahura Mazdāh in inscriptions of Artaxerxes II (405-359), cf. § 7, it has been argued that by the end of the fifth century

'Zoroastrianism', as it appears in the Younger Avesta, had conquered the Achaemenian court, and had been raised to the position of a state religion. The date of what is held to be the Achaemenian approval of Zoroastrianism will be even earlier if, as seems possible, the 'Zoroastrian' names of the months in the reformed Achaemenian calendar ('Creator' [= Ahura Mazdāh], 'Truth', 'Good Mind', 'Miθra', 'Fire', etc.), were chosen at the time when the calendar was introduced, which has been calculated at the year 441. Allowing one or two decades for 'Zoroastrianism' to spread from Aryana Vaējah to Western Iran, the original 'Zaraθuštrian' community would thus have accomplished a remarkable ideological somersault in less than one hundred years from the death of its founder, without our being able to say for what reasons. The assumption of such an early formation and westward spread of 'Zoroastrianism' is not only improbable, but also unnecessary, since the polytheistic religion of the Younger Avesta corresponds closely to the religious situation which is likely to have existed in Persis even earlier. Already in the late sixth century the Magi, impressed with Darius' exclusive adoption of Ahura Mazdāh (cf. § 14), may be presumed to have begun the gradual absorption, which continued for many decades, of elements of Zaraθuštrian terminology and practice. These elements, which kept filtering through from Aryana Vaējah, instead of replacing the polytheistic attitude of the Magi, appear to have been merely added to the Magian religious repertoire, so as to please the Great Kings. The Magi had thus no reason to consider themselves followers of Zaraθuštra's. They remained what they presumably always had been: professional priests whose function it was to officiate, chanting suitable *θεογονίαι* (cf. § 2), in the service of any Iranian employer, whether he happened to be a worshipper of Ahura Mazdāh, or Miθra, or any other Iranian divinity.

§ 27. The odd religious assortment of the Younger Avesta, precariously held together by the fiction that Ahura Mazdāh had revealed it to Zaraθuštra, need therefore not have corresponded to a *single* religion in Persis; it rather represents what in Western Iran was a state of coexistence of various religions, in which the cult of Mazdāh, richly endowed with gradually added Zaraθuštrian elements, occupied an important position. It is, so it seems, of this coexistence that the inscriptions of Artaxerxes II, and the month names in the reformed Achaemenian calendar, signify official approval. It is reasonable to suppose that the Younger Avesta is the fifth-fourth century fruit, rather than the sixth-fifth century seed of this coexistence. The 'Zaraθuštrian' priests of

Aryana Vaējah will then have been confronted in the second half of the 5th century, with the official sanction of a *de facto* religious situation, as it existed in the Iranian lands of the empire. To take advantage of this sanction and, backed by the tendency we noticed in § 24, translate the coexistence of various religions in terms of a single, 'Zoroastrian' religion, was a masterstroke of priestly wisdom. The resulting religious system, which we find in the Younger Avesta, could not fail to be artificial: a patchwork, the seams between whose elements cannot disguise their mutual incompatibility. But the gain was the foundation of a Church which by absorbing rival religions instead of antagonizing them at its own peril, outlived them all, and became the generally recognized representative of Iranian religious thought.

§ 28. With the assumption of such a historical background we gain an approximate basis for the chronology of the Younger Avesta. This scripture will be the result of an official sanction which was in force at the latest under the reign of Artaxerxes II, possibly already by the year 441 (cf. § 26). The composition of the oldest YAv. texts may have followed within one or two decades after the sanction had been given. The oldest texts in YAv. language one might theoretically expect to be those which do not, or not necessarily, imply a mixture of Mazdāhism with other cults. But such texts are mostly concerned with purification rules, and belong to our group I (cf. § 19), the composition of which is clearly of considerably later date than groups i and k (v. § 42). However, a few texts of k, e.g. Y 62 and most of Y 68, read like YAv. versions of the late parts of Zoroastrian b (cf. § 24); these were probably composed not later than the oldest Yašts of group i. When we come to 'Zoroastrian' texts proper, it is clear that generally speaking k is later than i: the hymns (i) to Miθra, Vərəθraγna, Tištrya, etc., constitute, as it were, the introduction of the new gods to the Zoroastrian community, while the litanies (k) treat the names of these gods as part of a well-established ritual. A formal indication of the priority of at least part of i, is the reinterpretation — shown by inversion — of *miθra ahura* (Yt 10^{113.145}) as *ahura miθra* 'Ahura (and) Miθra' in the litanies (Y 2¹¹. 3¹³. 17¹⁰, etc.; *miθra ahura* in Ny 1⁷ shows this verse to be an ancient quotation).

§ 29. Not all hymns (YAŠTS) of the Avestan book which bears the title *Yašt* are early. Yt 1-4, 12, 18, 20 sq., are clearly late compilations, patched up with stereotyped invocations (cf. § 39) which lend them the character of magical texts. Even these hymns, however, may have occasionally preserved very ancient ideas and expressions. Of the remaining hymns numbers 5 (with Y 65, cf. § 39), 8, 10, 13, 17, and 19, respectively

dedicated to Anāhitā, Tištrya, Miθra, the Fravašis, Aši, and the Xvārənah, to which must be added Y 9-11¹⁰ (Haoma), and Y 57 with Yt 11 (Sraoša), have not undeservedly been called 'the great Yašts'. They constitute the prize poems of YAv. literature. Yt 9 (Drvāspā), 14 (Vərəθraγna), 15 (Vayu), and 16 (the Religion), have the character of Yašts, but are somewhat defective in form (14, 15) or contents (9, 16); they seem to have been reconstituted from fragments of the original Yašts they replaced, with the addition of quotations from other texts. The normal pattern of a Yašt consists of description, eulogy, and invocation of the god(s), alternating with references to legendary or historical events. The usual method of inserting these events is to quote them as occasions on which their chief characters invoked the god(s) to whom the hymn is dedicated.

§ 30. All Yašts are at least partly metrical. The uneven length of the verse lines shows that the metre was accentual, the probable number of stresses per line being usually three, with an irregular interspersion of two-stress or four-stress lines, either singly or in small sets. The number of syllables per three-stress line averages eight. Where the stresses are two or four, the range of variation in the number of syllables is respectively 3-8 and 8-16, although the outside numbers at either end of the range are rare. Historically this metrical flexibility may be taken to be the result of the imposition of a stress of intensity, on eight-syllable lines of the Vedic type that had been inherited from a time when accentuation was purely tonal. These would normally take three stresses per line, but would sometimes fall into two stress-units, and occasionally into four. The inherited octosyllables would thus establish a range of stress-patterns in which new verses could be composed without regard to syllable-count. The new three-stress lines would, however, tend to remain at ± 8 syllables, while with two-stress lines the tendency would be to fall below that number, and with four-stress lines, to exceed it. Characteristic of the hymns (with the exception of the one to Haoma, Y 9 sqq.) is the grouping of stanzas into sets of varying length, called *karde*-s. The opening and the closing formula of each *karde*, beginning with the second or third, tend to remain the same throughout a given Yašt. The Yašts have over other parts of the Avesta the advantage of picturesqueness: in contrast to the moralizing, didactic, or liturgic character of most Avestan texts, in the Yašts there is action, and the gods have impressive traits and skills, which the authors obviously take pleasure in describing in imaginative terms. The Miθra Yašt, with its 145 stanzas strung together in 35 *kardes*, stands out as a feat of sustained descriptive power in early Indo-European literature.

§ 31. An interesting convention, which adds to the vividness of the Yašts, and remained in force throughout the Younger Avesta, is that in referring to beings who in the dualistic conception of the Zoroastrians belong to the creation of the Evil Spirit, the authors used, wherever synonyms were available, a different set of nouns and verbs from that which they applied to the creation of Ahura Mazdāh. Thus in 'daēvic' parlance words for mouth, hand, belly, podex, leg, man, woman, son, house, army, creating, dying, running, speaking, eating, and others, are distinguished from the corresponding words in 'ahuric' language. Occasionally even a second synonym is set aside for 'neutral' use. Thus 'eye', 'ear', and 'head', are respectively *čašman-*, *gaoša-*, *sarah-* in general, *dōiθra-*, *uš-*, *vaγdana-* in 'ahuric', and *aš-*, *karəna-*, *kaməraδa-* in 'daēvic' language. The beginnings of this convention can be traced to the Gāthās, where *hunu-* '(daēvic) son' is found beside *puθra-* 'son (in general)', and *həndvar-* 'to converge running' is used 'daēvically', as in the Younger Avesta.

§ 32. Some of the divinities revered in the Yašts had developed from Zoroastrian figures in accordance with the tendency mentioned in § 24. Such are Aši (Yt 17), Sraoša (Yt 11 + Y 57, cf. **d** in § 19), and the Fravašis (Yt 13, cf. **b** (Y 37), **g** (Y 13⁷)). Other divinities to whom Yašts are dedicated were alien to Zoroastrianism. The means by which their exalted position in Zoroastrian hymns was justified are often transparent enough: Miθra invokes Mazdāh (Yt 10⁷³), Mazdāh worships Miθra (Yt 10¹²³); Mazdāh and Zoroastrian worship Anāhitā (Yt 5^{17.104}); Zoroastrian enquires of Mazdāh how Vərəθraγna is to be worshipped (Yt 14⁴⁹); etc. The mythical incidents in the Yašts are mostly epic where non-Zoroastrian divinities are concerned. With the divinities that are hypostases of Zoroastrian notions the heroic element is obviously an innovation, and appears infrequently (cf. Yt 17²⁴ sqq., imported from Yts 5 and 9; Yt 13³⁷ sq.); in its stead we find a cosmogonic myth in Yt 13¹⁻¹⁹, and a lyrical episode in Yt 17¹⁷⁻²². The hymn to the Zoroastrian Sraoša ('Discipline') is devoid of such embellishments, as is, on the other hand, also the Miθra Yašt, except for one obscure episode in Yt 10¹¹³.

§ 33. It is noteworthy that episodes involving gods only are rare in the Avesta: apart from the cosmogonic myth just referred to, and the metamorphoses of Vərəθraγna (Yt 14²⁻²⁷), only Yt 8²⁰⁻²⁹ (the fight between Tištrya and the daēva Apaoša) and Yt 19⁴⁵⁻⁵¹ can be quoted in point; in the last episode the Good and the Evil Spirits, respectively Fire and the dragon Aži, contend for the Xvarənah, symbol of fortune, which Apam Napāt eventually takes out of harm's way. It would seem

that at the time when the hymns were composed not only Mazdāh, but also each non-Zaraθuštrian god, had been the object of a separate cult for a sufficiently long period to discourage the idea of divine interaction. The episodes that are not primarily concerned with gods can be classified as belonging to three groups. In the first the field is held by the earliest human heroes and kings, who belong to the 'first-created' (*paraḍāta*-, cf. Vendidad 20¹) generation. The narrative includes Kərəsāspa's fights with monsters that go back to the Indo-Iranian period (Aži, Gandarəwa), the 'golden age' which obtained under Yima's rule before his fall, and the bowshot achieved by the archer Ərəxša. The second group comprises what may be considered to have been historical events: the wars of Kavi Haosravah with the Turanian Fraŋrasyan, of Kavi Vištāspa with the Hyaonas, the rivalry between Naotaras and Hvōvas, etc. The third group, a typical 'Zoroastrian' product, consists of episodes involving mythologization of Zaraθuštra: the prophet is represented as worshipping various gods, putting to flight the Evil Spirit (Yt 17¹⁹) and the daēvas (Y 9¹⁵; Yt 19^{79 sqq.}), talking to Haoma (Y 9^{1 sqq.}), being caressed and complimented by Aši (Yt 17^{21 sq.}). Cf. also § 40.

§ 34 The stories inserted in the Yašts are not usually told in full, but merely alluded to, often in so obscure a fashion that they remain incomprehensible to us unless their reappearance in the Šāh Nāma or in Pahlavi literature throws light on them. Clearly when the Yašts were composed the stories were so well known that a hint was sufficient to recall them. It was economy, rather than lack of skill or of interest in detail, which caused the priestly authors to be concise; the purpose in composing a hymn was to extol the god, not to tell tales or write history. Occasionally, however, an author would be carried away by the picturesqueness of a story, and go into happily expressed details, as in Yt 8¹⁸⁻³⁴, Yt 5⁶¹⁻⁶⁶, Yt 19^{39-51, 56-64}. The complete Avesta, with its three times more texts than have come down to us, will have contained more examples; cf. the vivid treatment of the legend of Kərəsāspa as preserved in the Rivāyāt (NYBERG, *Oriental Studies* . . . Pavry, 336 sqq.).

§ 35. How did the Yašts attain the form in which we read them, and who was responsible for it? Since CHRISTENSEN's painstaking studies it has become usual to think of these hymns as being in their non-Zaraθuštrian parts as old as the Gāθās, if not older. Ancient hymns dedicated to pre-Zaraθuštrian divinities, and preserved each by their respective priests, were, in this view, taken over by Zaraθuštrian priests towards the end of the fifth century, and superficially 'zoroastrianized'. CHRISTENSEN, accordingly, felt justified in carving up the Yašts as consisting of an

ancient 'pagan' layer on which Zoroastrian additions were twice superimposed, in late Achaemenian, and again in Sasanian times. This is not entirely satisfactory. It is true that the 'pagan' contents of the *Yašts* often represent ancient Indo-Iranian patrimony, and the wording may sometimes pertain to a long hymnal tradition. But unless the 'pagan' parts as we read them represent a translation from an older idiom, the time of their composition is likely to coincide more or less with that of the oldest 'Zaraθuštrian' texts of the Younger Avesta, such as Y 62 or 68 (cf. § 28); for the language is the same in both, and markedly different from that of the sixth-century *Gāthās*. Admittedly one has to allow for the possibility that the difference between the *Gāthāic* and the Younger Avestan idioms may be dialectal rather than due to diachronic changes within a single language (cf. MEILLET, *JAs.*, 1917, ii, 195). Even so one might expect the fragments of 'Ur-*Yašts*' which CHRISTENSEN thought were embedded in the hymns, to bear some formal distinction from the supposedly later additions.

§ 36. If we assume, for the sake of maintaining the gist of CHRISTENSEN's view, that the 'pagan' hymns had been translated into Younger Avestan from an archaic form of the language, the most likely translators will be the Zoroastrian priests who incorporated the pagan gods in the *Zaraθuštrian* system; for precisely such incorporation would provide a plausible occasion, and reason, for translating the hymns into everyday speech. But having reached thus far one may go further, and doubt if what took place can properly be called a 'translation with additions'. The Zoroastrian priests may well have retold in verses of their own making, what they knew of the pagan gods. In so doing they would, of course, keep an eye on the contents and the wording of the hymns which their 'pagan' priestly colleagues recited in archaic Avestan language. Certain Avestan legends are in any case likely to have been taken over from 'pagan' hymns, as they must have belonged from the beginning to a genuinely priestly tradition; this applies e.g. to the *Yima* myths, since *Yima* (*Yama*) was mythologized also by the priestly authors of the *Rig Veda*, and can be reasonably assumed for such episodes as the *Xvarənah* legends and the metamorphoses of *Vərəθraϥna*. It is from their 'pagan' colleagues, therefore, that the *Zaraθuštrian* priests, who had scarcely been brought up on a literature of entertainment, may have acquired a taste for lively descriptions of mythical events. This taste they could develop from their own resources (adapting to it *Zaraθuštrian* material), or by turning for inspiration to secular poetry (cf. § 38). The assumption of single, Zoroastrian, authorship is consistent with the occasional evidence

of skilful and sensitive handling of the religious ingredients which it had been decided should be mixed in the Yašts. In particular, the integration of 'pagan' Haoma in Zoroastrianism (cf. Y 9 sqq.), and of zoroastrianized Haoma in the cult of Miθra (cf. Yt 10^{88-90.120}), reflect a discriminating consistency which one would rather associate with a creative than with a merely compilatory effort. If what we read seems at times crudely put together, we are free to blame partly less careful authors, partly the harshness of the religious compromise, partly the defective tradition from whose fragments the Avestan texts were pieced together in Sasanian times.

§ 37. The absence, or apparent absence, throughout our groups i and k (cf. § 19), of historical or geographical references that would indicate a later experience of the world than could have been obtained in Aryana Vaejah at the time of Vištāspa, is not inconsistent with the composition of YAv. texts having begun as late as the second half of the fifth century B.C. For Zoroastrians the formation of the Religion naturally came to an end with the death of Zoroāstra, that is approximately with the beginning of Achaemenian rule in Aryana Vaejah. Zoroastrians believing that Zoroāstra had approved of the religious mixture by which they were replacing his doctrine, were careful not to introduce in the new literature they were providing, any reference to Achaemenian conditions of which the prophet could have had no knowledge.

§ 38. As noted above (§ 34), the missing details of incidental stories in the Yašts are sometimes to be found in the Šāh Nāma or in Pahlavi literature. Two diverging explanations have been proposed. Either, as CHRISTENSEN maintained, the missing details reached Middle Iranian times through Zoroastrian texts belonging to the three quarters of the Avesta which we no longer have. Or, as Mary BOYCE has vigorously urged for the Kayanian heroic cycle, there was a secular oral literature of entertainment, through which the cycle passed in unbroken continuity from the time of Vištāspa to the Sasanian era. CHRISTENSEN's view is justified insofar as part of the Avestan lore survives only in Middle Persian Zoroastrian writings, whose authors often supply complementary information to what we read in the Avesta. However, just as in scientific matters the complementary information of Pahlavi texts is not exclusively based on the Avesta (cf. H.W. BAILEY, *Zoroastrian Problems*, 80 sq., and *passim*), so the additional data on the Kayanian cycle which the Pahlavi commentators quote, need not always go back to lost portions of the Avesta: they may derive partly from the version of the cycle as it was recited by Sasanian minstrels, which to an unknown extent may

survive in the Šāh Nāma. Even in ancient times, as mentioned in § 36, the Zoroastrian priestly authors may be presumed to have occasionally turned for inspiration to court poets. Whether the latter in their turn were influenced by what the priests were reciting, we have no means of telling. The situation in Eastern Iran may not have differed greatly from the one in the West, where the ἑρῶν θεῶν which were recited together with heroic legends (cf. § 15), presumably derived from a priestly tradition. Religious poets, witness the Avesta (cf. § 34), were as able as epic bards to tell a good tale, though not always as willing. It would seem that either could borrow from the other, and both had much to give.

39. The remaining parts of the Avesta, **k** and **l** (cf. § 19), cannot compare in literary value with the Gāthās or the Yašts, and may here be treated summarily. **k** (with which one may range certain passages in the late Yašts, cf. § 29), largely consists of numerous and extremely repetitive invocations which, as noted in § 28, will be, with the exception of a few ancient quotations, of later date than the Yašts. On the whole these formulae are expressed in grammatically correct Avestan, and are therefore likely to have been composed at an earlier date than the bulk of the **l** texts (on whose date v. § 42), perhaps towards the end of the Achaemenian period. The chief interest of the litanies lies in the 'Zoroastrian' pantheon they invoke, whose study belongs to the field of religious history. In the litanies of **Y** are embedded, apart from our groups **a-h** and parts of **i**, certain texts of a special character. These are (1) the homilies of **Y** 19-21 on the first three prayers of **c**, (2) **Y** 62 and 68, on which cf. § 28, and (3) **Y** 65, a prayer to the waters, which in contents is complementary to **Yt** 5 (cf. § 29). Similarly, most of **Ā** 3-4 is devoted to instruction on ritual matter, and properly belongs to **l**.

§ 40. Under the last of our headings, that of **l**, we may confine our attention to the *V(endidat)*. For the fragment of *H*, a description of the fate of the soul after death, reads like a fuller version of *V* 19²⁷⁻³², and *N*, which is full of textual corruptions, is strictly a work on ritual, although it, too, is not quite devoid of imagery (e.g. 'to teach the Holy Word to an unbeliever is to lend one's tongue to the wolf', sect. 17). As to the Avestan fragments of *Aog*, they act, as it were, as headings in a Pāzand liturgy for the dead; nothing is known of their provenance. The *Vendidat* (properly *Vidēvdāt* 'Law against the daēvas') has often been compared with the *Leviticus*. Basically it is a manual, in prevalently catechismal form (Ahura Mazdāh answering Zaratuštra's questions), of the rules of purification after pollution, and atonement after sin.

With the rules a good deal of incidental matter arising from their application has entered the book, and we are allowed a glimpse of the day-to-day life of the men and women for whose benefit it was composed. The *V* also includes a few mythical episodes which altogether fall out of the framework of a 'Book of Law', such as Yima's building of a kind of Noah's Ark (chapter 2), or the temptation of Zaratustra by the Evil Spirit (ch. 19); these are probably late *rifacimenti* of what the authors remembered of certain old texts (cf. § 33). The same applies to the much discussed geographical chapter, the first in the book. As a source of information on the realities of ancient Eastern Iranian life the *V* is by far the most important book of the Avesta. Unfortunately the enjoyment in reading it is marred by two serious flaws: one is the disturbing negligence in respect of what according to older Avestan standards are correct inflectional endings; the other consists in the deadly pedantry which obsesses the authors and leads them to dreary repetitions and hair-splitting classifications.

§ 41. This pedantry, combined with the emphasis the *V* lays on the destruction of obnoxious creatures (*xrafstra*-) and repulsion of *daēvas*, has induced students of the Avesta to attribute the authorship of the *V* to the Magi, who in Herodotus' description (i 140) display just such a meticulous anti-xrafstrian zeal. How exactly the Magi came to have a hand in the composition of a part of the Avesta, and how to reconcile this probably correct assumption with the apparent absence of any mention of the Magi in the scripture, is far from clear. It is conceivable, but entirely a matter of guesswork, that with the collapse of the Achaemenian empire groups of Magi took refuge in Eastern Iran; having been in charge of the Mazdāhian ministry in Western Iran, they may have been suffered in their new homes to introduce and administer their own purification rules, which the Zoroastrian priests in due course thought it advisable to formulate in Avestan language. By making this detour, instead of supposing that the Magi themselves composed the texts (as Christensen did), we can account both for the post-Achaemenian date of composition of the *V*, and the absence from it of any reference to Western Iranian countries or institutions, including the Magian priesthood itself.

§ 42. The post-Achaemenian date of at least part of the *V* and *N* is assured by HENNING's discovery that one of the two systems of measure employed in these texts is the Greco-Roman one. In addition, a late date has always been inferred from the not very competent handling of the Avestan language; the inflectional system evidently had broken, or

was breaking down, and the authors were following as best they could, the analogy of older texts. As to the absence of references to Western Iran, this is in the tradition of the best Avestan authors (cf. § 37), whose late epigones may be expected to have adhered to it even when formulating Magian rules. The Magi themselves, one may venture to guess, would have been only too anxious to insert in the scripture passages extolling Magian virtues and proclaiming the connections of Zoroastrianism with Western Iran. By the time the Magi assumed exclusive control of Zoroastrian affairs also in Eastern Iran (3rd-2nd cent. B.C.?) the Magian title was bound to remain excluded from the scripture: the earliest Avestan canon had been formed, and could no longer be interfered with except in the arrangement, or re-arrangement, of its sections and fragments, and the restoration according to preserved lexical and structural patterns, of sections known to be missing.

§ 43. To end, there follows, based on REICHEL'T's survey, a concise list of contents of the V in the sequence of its chapters. (1) List of countries created by Mazdāh, and the countercreations of the Evil Spirit. (2) Yima's 'Noah's Ark'. (3) (Un)comfortable places on earth; praise of agriculture. (4) Contracts. (5) Conditions in which pollution through corpses occurs. (6) Removing corpses from ground or water. (7) More about pollution through corpses; physicians; places for disposal of corpses (*daxma*-). (8) Purification of corpse-bearers, etc. (9) The purification ceremony of the 'nine nights'. (10) Verses to be recited to repel *daēvas*. (11) Verses effective for purification in general. (12) Prayers for dead relatives, purification of their dwellings. (13) Dogs. (14) Penalties for killing an otter. (15) Pregnancy. (16) Menstruation. (17) Care of hair and nails. (18) Priests; care of fire; getting up early; conversation between Discipline and Falsehood; prostitutes. (19) The temptation of Zaratustra and frustration of the *daēvas*. (20) Thrīta, first physician. (21) Invocation of cow, rain, sun, moon, stars. (22) How the 99,999 diseases are healed, with which the Evil Spirit infected Ahura Mazdāh.

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§ 35. A. CHRISTENSEN, *Études sur le zoroastrianisme de la Perse antique*, 1928; *Les Kayanides*, 1932; *Die Iranier*, 214 sq.

§ 38. Mary BOYCE, see ad § 2, and in *Serta Cantabrigiensia* (presented to Members of the 23rd Internat. Congr. of Orientalists), 1954, 45 sqq.

§ 40. N: cf. ad § 19 (a), and A. WAAG, *Nirangistan*, 1941. — Aog: cf. ad § 19 (a), and J. DUCHESNE-GUILLEMIN, *JAs*, 1936, i, 241. — Realities described in the V (and to a lesser extent in other Av. texts): W. GEIGER, *Ostiranische Kultur*, 1882; Horst FICHTNER, *Die Medizin im Avesta*, 1924; A. KAMMENHUBER, *ZDMG* 108, 1958, 299 sqq. [H. HUMBACH, *Ztschr. f. vgl. Sprachforsch.* 77 (1961), 99 sqq. (with K. HOFFMANN, *ibid.* 79, 238)].

§ 41. Magi as authors of V: A. CHRISTENSEN, *Essai sur la démonologie iranienne*, 1941, 28 sq. — Not mentioned in the Avesta: E. BENVENISTE, *Les Mages dans l'ancien Iran*, 1938 (contra: H. H. SCHAEDEER, *OLZ*, 1940, 375 sqq.).

§ 42. W. B. HENNING, *JRAS*, 1942, 235 sq.

§ 43. REICHEL'T's survey: v. ad § 19, (d). — (ch. 1): A. CHRISTENSEN, *Le premier chapitre du Vendidad*, 1943; M. MOLÉ, *JAs*, 1951, 283 sqq. — (ch. 2): Otto PAUL, *Wörter und Sachen*, 1938, 176 sqq. — (ch. 3): F. A. CANNIZZARO, *Il capitolo georgico dell'Avesta*, 1913. — (ch. 4): H. LÜDERS, *SPAW*, 1917, 347 sqq.

[Note: This article was submitted in July, 1955, and slightly revised in July, 1959.]

ADDENDUM

Some of the problems touched upon in the above chapter have meanwhile been treated more fully in *JNES*, XXIII, 1964, 12 sqq. by the present writer, who begs leave to draw attention to two considerations put forward in that article. One (p. 18) is that, contrary to previous opinion, Darius appears to mention Zoroaster's 'Entities' in the Behistun inscription, as he would surely not have done if his beliefs were not Zarathuſtrian (cf. § 14 above). The other (p. 20) concerns the decline of original Old Persian inscriptional production after Xerxes (see above, § 7). This is best attributed to loss on the part of professional scribes, of familiarity with the spelling conventions of the Old Persian script, and the loss, to the adoption of the Aramaic (and I would now add the Elamite) language and script as usual means of written communication. The later authors of inscriptions confined themselves to copying, with occasional slight alterations, phrases which Darius had coined. That their activity depended indeed on what they could copy from Darius, is virtually assured by the fact that their phraseology is restricted to that of Darius' low-level building inscriptions; it never extends to statements exclusively found in the Behistun and Naqš-e Rostam inscriptions, which texts were carved too high up the rock to be legible.